

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-90. (cancelled)

91. (new) A method for removing material from a workpiece using laser energy comprising the steps of:

directing a flow of liquid to the workpiece in a manner to form a flowing layer of liquid across a portion of the surface of the workpiece wherein the thickness of the layer is in the range of 25 to 100 microns; and

directing a laser beam to the workpiece through the liquid layer, said laser beam having a fluence sufficient to remove material from the workpiece in one of a cutting, grooving, drilling or etching procedure.

92. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein the laser beam has a wavelength in the ultraviolet spectrum.

93. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein the laser beam is focused onto the workpiece.

94. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein said laser beam is pulsed.

95. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein said laser beam is CW.

96. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein said liquid is substantially transmissive to the wavelength of the laser beam

97. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein said step of directing the liquid flow includes coupling a propellant with the liquid to create a spray of liquid onto the workpiece.

98. (new) A method as recited in claim 97, wherein the propellant includes a pressurized gas that is not substantially photoabsorbing at the wavelength of the laser beam.

99. (new) A method as recited in claim 98, wherein the pressure of the pressurized gas is between 5 and 100 psi.

100.(new) A method as recited in claim 98, wherein the pressure of the pressurized gas is around 18 psi.

101. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, further including the step of withdrawing excess liquid from the workpiece.

102. (new) A method as recited in claim 101, wherein said step of withdrawing excess liquid is performed using a vacuum.

103. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein the flow of liquid is controlled by a computer.

104. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, further including the step of translating the workpiece with respect to the laser beam.

105. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein the thickness of the layer is maintained in the range of 25 to 50 microns.

106. (new) A method as recited in claim 91, wherein the flow rate of the liquid layer is around one milliliter per minute.

107. (new) method as recited in claim 91, further including the step of ceasing the discharge of liquid across the workpiece prior to the laser beam completing a cut-through of the workpiece.